

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

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1. (currently amended) A screening method for active ingredients which exhibit effects of ameliorating pruritus, rough skin or sensitive skin, or effects of skin whitening, by inhibiting production and/or release of stem cell factor (hereinafter, SCF), the method being characterized by comprising the steps of contacting epidermal keratinocytes with test ingredients, assaying the amount of SCF produced and/or released by said cells, and selecting test ingredients which reduce the amount of production and/or release of SCF as said active ingredients, wherein said SCF-expressing cells epidermal keratinocytes are subjected to stimulation to promote SCF production and/or release, and wherein said stimulation is drying stimulation or chemical stimulation.

2. (canceled)

3. (currently amended) The screening method according to claim 1, wherein said SCF-expressing cells epidermal keratinocytes are contacted with said test ingredients, after which said cells are